CHAPTER 6 - RELIGION

When Martha Davis McNeel accompanied her pioneering bridegroom to their new home in the Little Levels she carried with her a sturdily bound Bible printed in her native Welch dialect. With great fervor she clasped this one link with the quiet existence now lost behind miles of tangled wilderness. Her feeling was typical of the frontier. For the settlers who pitted themselves against almost inconceivable odds of climate, terrain, and Indians in wresting homes from the wild land, religion took on new significance. Their faith assured them that a Supreme Justice would not allow their efforts to result in anything but ultimate victory, and that a Divine Power would shelter them from the stupendous forces which opposed them. Religion became a living strength to the Scotch and Irish settlers who made up the bulk of the frontier population. Already, in the homelands, they had felt the touch of religious-political struggle and reform upon their own lives. Even in America persecution had harried the newer groups. Presbyterians and Methodists and the smaller group of Baptists, jealous of the freedom of the New World, drove ever westward toward less restricted areas.

Martha McNeel and her Bible had a large influence on the future of the Church in lower Pocahontas. John McNeel and the Kinnison brothers stripped the bark from slender logs and built Mount Taber, the first house of worship in the neighborhood. Known as the White Pole Church because of its construction, the building was the first stronghold of Methodism in Pocahontas County. As early as 1788 famed Bishop Francis Asbury made White Pole a favorite way point on his Wilderness Campaigns, as he called his missionary journeys through the western lands. Excerpts from his journal outline the

trials of the pioneer itinerant ministers.

"Tuesday 8, (July 1788) Reached M'Neal's on the Little Levels, where almost the whole settlement came together, with whom I found freedom on Matt. XI 28-30. Our brother Pheobus had to answer questions propounded to him until evening.

"Sat. 17 (July 1790) Some very pointed things were delivered relative to parents and children, from Geni XVIII 19. After being in public exercises from ten til two O'clock, we rode in the afternoon twenty miles to the little levels of Greenbrier. On my way I premeditated the sending of a preacher to a newly-settled place in the Kenhaway County.

"Sunday 18 (July 1790) We had a warm sermon at M'Neal's at which many were highly offended; but I trust their false peace is broken. There are many bears in this part of the country; not long since, a child in this neighborhood was killed by one.

"Friday 26 (May 1792) O! what a solitary country this is! We have now 120 miles before us, fifty of which is a wilderness. There is a guard at two houses on our route; (through fear of Indians) but I do not fear.

"Friday 27, (May 1796) I felt myself very heavy, my mind unprepared for the congregation at Gilboa meeting house, and could not preach with any satisfaction. - - - We came - - about four O'clock aiming at the Little Levels; but darkness came on, and we had to climb and blunder over the point of a mountain, in descending which my feet were so squeezed that the blood was ready to gush out of the pores.

"Sunday 29, (May 1796) I was very warm in body, and in mind at M'Neal's. In the afternoon (contrary to my sentiment and practice on the

Lords day) we took our departure, purposing to reach Morgantown on Wednesday evening, in order to attend an appointment made for me on Thursday, the second of June. We reached my old friend Drinnon's who received us gladly, and entertained us kindly. Next day (Monday) we opened our campaign through the mountains, following a path I had thought never to travel again. Frequently we were in danger of being plucked off our horses by the boughs of the trees under which we had to ride. About seven O'clock after crossing six mountains and many rocky creeks and fords of Elk and Monongahela Rivers, we made the Valley of Distress, called by the natives Tyger's Valley."

Even before Bishop Asbury began his work in Western Virginia the militant Dr. John Craig, first of the Presbyterian circuit riders, was shepherding a restless flock of Scotch-Irishmen in the far flung territory that now includes Pocahontas, Greenbrier, Monroe and Kanawha counties. Dr. Craig was a graduate of the University of Edinburg, Scotland, and was typical of the high-type of men sent to the western wilderness.

During the years immediately following the defeat of Braddock in 1754 the Indians scourged the area. The settlers, fearing for their lives, began to talk of retreating to the shelter of Williamsburg. Dr. Craig hurried among the people, shaming them for their cowardice. He wrote: "I oppose that scheme as a scandal to our nation, falling below our brave ancestors, making ourselves a reproach among Virginians, a dishonor to our friends at home, an evidence of cowardice, want of faith and noble Christian dependance on God as able to save and deliver from the heathen; and withal a lasting blot forever on all our posterity."

Under his leadership forts were built and guards were organized

throughout his entire parish. With his rifle and Bible he stroke to service. To Dr. Craig the Sabbath was actually a "day of worship." Services began at ten o'clock and continued until noon. After a recess of one hour, in which the congregation ate their picnic lunches, the program was continued until the evening gloom smudged the pages of the Scripture into illegibility. After the benediction the people hurried home, sometimes ten or fifteen miles away, to tend their stock and crawl into bed at midnight.

Presbyterianism gained tremendous power in the Greenbrier region during the 1790's and the first decades of the nineteenth century. The Rev. Ben Edward Crawford, the missionaries, Frazier and Read, and a handful of other itinerant ministers roamed the mountains and hollows, searching out every hidden community and exhorting the lonely pioneers to join in God's work. The Rev. John McCue has the peculiar title of first "resident" pastor of what was later to become the Greenbrier Presbytery. He was "resident" in that he made his home within the territory; but like those of his colleagues, his field of activity was indefinitely huge. Ordained on May 20, 1783, in Monmouth Church near Lexington, Virginia, he preached for nine years in an area including such widely separated points as The Sinks in Monroe, the Little Levels and Head-of-Greenbrier in Pocahontas, and along the Tygart Valley of Randolph County.

Many early preachers covered circuits several hundred miles long, riding or walking over narrow mountain trails and holding services in the homes of settlers, in barns, or under the open sky. No one-sermon exhorters were these. The congregation at one appointment often followed en masse to the next and, if the distance was not too great, on to the next, and even to

the fourth or fifth appointments. Since a minister was supposed to be an ever-flowing fountain of new and different ideas and interpretations, it would have been almost fatal to his prestige if some persistent follower hastened home to spread news that the minister had repeated the sermon which he had addressed to them a few days before. Such stops were known as "appointments" because the pastor would make an appointment to preach at that place several months, or even several years, in the future. He was dependent upon the hospitality of the people for his lodging, and his annual salary seldom exceeded $200.

To have the minister stay at one's house was almost the highest honor a frontiersman could receive. Many prominent settlers of the period built exceedingly large living rooms in order that their homes might be chosen for religious service and other public gatherings. Mrs. Jacob Warwick of Cloverlick was so delighted when an itinerant minister honored her home that she almost always gave him a fine saddle horse or a gift of equal value.

Since the Rev. Aretas Loomis traveled from Beverly only every fourth Sunday to preach at Cloverlick, Mrs. Warwick organized a Sunday School class in the schoolhouse near the Josiah Friel cabin. The class was composed largely of the families of Josiah Brown, Jeremiah Friel, John Sharp and William Sharp. Mrs. Warwick conducted the services, opening the session sharply at nine o'clock. There was no praying. Instead, she read from the Bible and lectured without pause until two o'clock in the afternoon, whereupon she would be so exhausted that members of the class would have to lift the aged woman onto her horse. A short time before her death in 1823 she received communion during one of the Reverend Loomis' visits. She was so

overcome by emotion that she was prostrate for four weeks. Unfortunately; there was no minister available at the time of her death, and this devout woman was buried without even the simplest religious ceremony.

In 1818, such men of God as S. L. Graham, James Kerr, William G. Campbell, and Joseph Brown added their strength to the Presbyterian ministry. At the same time James Avis, John Miller, Amos Smith, J. W. Kenny, James Watts, Samuel Ellis, Wm. P. McDowell, Elisha Knox, James Kerr, William Houston, Harvey Sawyers, N. Pendleton and John Howe were championing the cause of Methodism. The Rev. S. B. Witt, pioneer Baptist, preached Huntersville's first public service, lamenting the fact that a dancing class adjourned only long enough to hear his sermon before resuming practice.

All of them were instrumental in creating and directing the wave of church growth which developed as the population increased and more densely settled communities made cooperative church work possible. The history of the numerous churches of Pocahontas is entangled in a maze of legends and disjoined records, but there is little doubt that the congregation of the little White Pole Church, built sometime before 1788, was the first organized within the bounds of the present county.

Earliest records of this church, dated 1789, list the following members: John and Martha McNeel, James and Rebecca Lewis, Alexander Waddell and wife, Charles and Jacob Kinnison, Mrs. James Brinnell, John Switzer and wife, Richard and Nancy Hill, and Abraham McNeel and wife. Although open to all creeds, it was known as a Methodist Episcopal church. The building soon became too small for the growing population and, on April 10, 1799, John and Martha McNeel deeded a plot including the original church to the

congregation for their use in building a larger structure. When it was decided that the original site was too difficult of access for the majority, the trustees accepted instead an acre of ground two miles east of Hillsboro on the old Denmar Road, donated by John McNeel's son-in-law, John Jordan, in January, 1830. The building erected on the Denmar Road was burned several years later, and Wesley Chapel, a neat, frame building was raised on a lot next to the present Methodist Episcopal parsonage lot in Hillsboro. Built on ground given by Nathaniel Kinnison, January 15, 1853, this church served until, at the close of the century, the congregation began to overflow once more.

Hillsboro is also the home of the earliest Presbyterian organization in the county. William Poage, Sr., was largely responsible for the establishment, in 1793, of what was to become the Oak Grove Presbyterian Church. The Rev. Dr. William Hill of Winchester officially organized the group during a visit to the Little Levels in that year. No records of the church during that period remain, but the notes of some of the itinerant pastors of the day reveal that the church enjoyed little activity save that occasioned by their own infrequent visits.

The Rev. Samuel L. Graham, who came in 1819 as the first regularly visiting minister, devoted one third of his time to the congregation and spent the remainder at Spring Creek and Anthony's Creek. The affairs of the church steadily improved under his ministry. In 1826 the Rev. James Kerr also gave a part of his time, and through his encouragement the first brick church was erected in the oak grove from which the congregation received its ultimate name.

In August, 1830, the church was completely reorganized. Josiah Beard, George Poage, John Jordan, and Samuel Poage were made Ruling Elders of the new congregation, which included William Bradshaw, Mrs. E. Poage, Mrs. Mc. Poage, Mrs. Nancy Cackley, Mrs. Jane Bradshaw, and Mrs. Betsy Poage. About the same time, Oak Grove Cemetery, still maintained by the congregation, was laid off west of the church.

The Rev. William G. Campbell served the church one fourth of his time during 1831, though it was but one of scores of appointments in Pocahontas, Nicholas, Monroe, and Fayette counties. For the entire work of his circuit he received $100 a year. After Campbell's ministry, the Oak Grove congregation was left unattended for two years until Dr. John S. Blain gave one third of his time to the charge in 1834. During his period of service, the church enjoyed a phenomenal increase in membership. Following the Rev. David Cunningham's year of service in 1835 the pulpit was again vacant for one year.

New life was given to the church in September, 1836, when the Rev. Joseph Brown accepted a call to attend the congregation one half of his time for $200 a year. Youngest of five prominent sons whom Mary Moore of Abbs Valley had given to the ministry, he already had won prominence for his energy and tact. During his first year with the Oak Grove congregation he also was able to join other ministers of the territory under the venerable Dr. John McElhenny in the formation of the new Greenbrier Presbytery, which contained all of what is now South-Central West Virginia and a small part of the parent state.

The records of the Oak Grove Church during and just preceding the Reverend Brown's pastorate present a picture of the firmness with which the

churches of that day ruled their people. Sampson Mathews, who with his wife, Nancy , had organized one of the early Sunday School classes in 1825, fell under the censure of the session in 1836 for indulging in a heated argument with John Graham of Huntersville about the administration of a road from Huntersville to some point in Nicholas County. Evidence was gathered, a regular trial was held, and the following decision was rendered by the session:

"After duly considering the testimony in the case of Mr. Mathews in an affray with John Graham in Huntersville, on the last Monday of April last, the Session are unanimously of the opinion that he was guilty of un-Christian conduct and whereupon that it be resolved he ought to be and hereby is excluded from the communion of the church until he give satisfactory evidence of repentence and amendment of life.

S. D. Poage, Clk. George Poage, Moderator"

Once committed to the church if was not easy to withdraw from its shelter as is evidenced by the minutes of the session on April 23, 1837: " - - - The session took under consideration the application of Mrs. Nancy Mathews for a certificate of dismission from the church. After due consideration, it was resolved that a certificate be not granted and that for the following reasons: 1st. Because the session has evidence to believe that it is not the intention of the member making the application to remove from the bounds of the congregation or unite with any other church. 2nd. This being the case, the session do not think themselves warranted by the constitution of our church, or by the word of God to grant this request. The session view themselves as acting under the authority of God and bound to act in conformity with his word, (whatever you do in word and deed - do all to the

glory of God) when an individual believes that such a change has been wrought in his or her heart as qualifies for membership in the Church of Christ, it is the duty of such individual to state the evidence of the change to the officers of the church. If they are satisfied that the individual has undergone a saving change of heart, it is made their duty to receive the applicant into the communion of the church. When persons have thus been received, the session do not consider that they have the right voluntarily to withdraw from the church, unless they can point to some passage in God's word giving them that privilege. Nor do the session consider that they, as the Judicatory of the church, have the right to sanction such disorder by giving such liberty, unless they find authority in the word of God or constitution of the church which gives them such right. Such authority, the session are convinced, is not contained in the word of God or the 'Confession of Faith' and therefore they feel bound to refuse the Application. Joseph Brown, Mod."

In June, 1837, "Ellen Hanes appeared before the session and made satisfactory acknowledgments of regret for having engaged in a dance at Thomas Bradshaw's." Mr. Bradshaw's name appeared again in September of that year when he " - - presented his certificate of dismission from the church at the head of Greenbrier, with that of his wife, as members in good regular standing up to the time of their removal from the bounds of that church (which was upwards to one year ago) to this church to be received as its members. Mr. Bradshaw having incurred the censure of the church, in the interval by tolerating a dance at his house and also by selling a horse in Huntersville on the Sabbath day, made satisfactory acknowledgements of regret to the session - was accordingly received. - - "

Such a happy state of affairs did not survive, for on September 8, 1839, "Mr. Thomas Bradshaw personally and voluntarily appeared before the session and made statement and acknowledgement of the fact that he permitted a civil dance at his house on the evening of Fourth of July last. Mr. Bradshaw, though he did not strictly justify dancing as right, yet thought it the least of two evils which would certainly follow on the occasion (the marriage of his daughter). Mr. Bradshaw not being disposed to express any regret for the deed, nor to give the session any acknowledgement to hope for a different course of management in the future -- Mr. Bradshaw having been previously before the session for a similar offense, the session thought it their duty to suspend Mr. Bradshaw from the communion of the church, and he was accordingly suspended. J. Brown, Mod."

The Reverend Brown's ministry continued until 1844, when he was succeeded by the Rev. Mitchell D. Dunlap, who served this church and Huntersville until 1868. During this period he was also principal of the Little Levels Academy which had gained such prominence that the whole community became known as "Academy," and the name, "Hillsboro," was for many years almost forgotten. Following his pastorate there was a lapse of three years which ended when the Rev. George L. Brown gave part of his time during 1871, and in 1872 until the session employed the Rev. David Spotts Sydenstricker to preach half of his time, beginning June 1. At the end of that year the Reverend Sydenstricker accepted a call to Arkansas, but returned after a short time and served the Oak Grove congregation until his retirement, June 18, 1905. During his term of office the church moved to its present site, the old brick chapel having deteriorated until it was unsafe. In th

structure brick from the old building was used for the substructure and flues. During the interim the congregation was hospitably received in the Methodists' Wesley Chapel.

Although the exact date of its erection is not known, Deer Creek Union Chapel, which stood in the center of the old part of Arbovale Cemetery on Hospital Run, was the first church built in the Greenbank community. James Tallman deeded the land to Benjamin Tallman, James Wooddell, and George Turner, trustees, July 5, 1831, but it is known that the building was already comparatively old at that time.

References to the building in records of other churches show that the church was used by all denominations in the neighborhood until they had built their own places of worship. The chapel was still used for camp meetings until 1858. Though the log structure measured only 30 by 40 feet its capacity was enlarged greatly by a gallery that extended almost to the center of the auditorium. The absence of a chimney indicates that it probably was not used during the winter months. Though few of the early churches held services in bad weather, most of them were equipped with one or more wood stoves for use in the fall and spring. Deer Creek Union was partially wrecked in the winter of 1861 by Confederate soldiers who removed the ceiling to ceil their cabins on Allegheny Mountain. Residents of the neighborhood chopped kindling from the sturdy pine logs and gradually weakened the abandoned structure until a high wind on a night in 1866 sent it crashing to the ground.

Liberty Church, then known as "Head of Greenbrier," organized by Aretas Loomis at Greenbank in 1804, had only the service of occasionally visiting ministers until 1860. Despite the comparative neglect of this congregation

they built, and dedicated October 11, 1851, one of the most tastefully designed and well constructed churches in use in the county today. Its overhanging roof, supported by trim, white pillars, is attractively reminiscent of the best architecture of Colonial Virginia. The building has been tended so carefully that it is in better condition than many churches of much later origin.

Beginning in 1860 the church had the services of such men as the Revs. R. P. Kennedy, David Sydenstricker, A. H. Hamilton, J. H. McCown, Wm. T. Price, B. A. Pendleton, John V. McCall, E. F. Alexander, R. M. Caldwell, and Henry W. McLaughlin who was ministering to the church at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The congregation lost a part of its membership in 1858 when a group living around Dunmore petitioned the Presbytery for a church of their own, asserting that they were forced to travel ten or twelve miles over bad roads to attend Liberty. Authorized to build Baxter Church, this group, which can be included entirely under the six family names of McCutcheon, Curry, McGloughlin, Nottingham, Craig, and Warwick, listened to the dedicatory sermon of the Rev. C. M. See, August 27, 1858, in a new church which architecturally was a modification of Liberty.

During the Civil War the new building was occupied by Union troops who damaged it so badly that it was not completely restored to its original beauty until just before the 50th anniversary of its founding. As was the case of many of these early churches, deed to the land was not given until after the building was already in use. On July 5, 1861, John W. and Caroline E. Warwick deeded 84 square poles to Trustees Robert D. McCutcheon, Robert

Curry, Jacob C. McLaughlin, Samuel H. McCutcheon and William T. Gannon.

Religious services along Elk were first held in the home of Robert Beale. The families of Beale, David Gibson, David Hannah, and Joseph Hannah gathered in the later 1820's to listen to Dr. McElhenney, William Campbell, and others of the early circuit riders. After Beale's death in 1833 most of the services were held at the home of David Gibson. Except for the period of the War between the States, service continued in the homes of the community until 1868 when the Pleasant Valley school was built on the land of John B. and Margaret Hannah. Meetings were held in the school until 1888. At that time William McLaughlin and William Gibson sponsored the building of a church.

McLaughlin died before the project was carried out, and Gibson financed the construction personally to the extent of more than $700. Upon completion it was named Marys Chapel in honor of his mother, Mary Sharp Gibson. In Gibson's deed to the Presbyterian congregation he stipulated that the church be available to all denominations.

Though records of the church were destroyed by fire the names of Samuel Gibson and Boyd Hannah survive as popular teachers during the early days of its organization. At present the church is served by the Rev. R. H. Riggs of the Methodists' Edray circuit. The Rev. O. N. Miles, last of the Presbyterian ministers to preach here, has retired and has not been replaced. Most precious asset of Marys Chapel is a library of almost 100 books, nearly all of a religious nature, which has been carefully preserved. Latest publication date to be found in the entire lot is 1840.

Beaver Creek Cemetery is the site of a log church built during the John

Blain's pastorate. Though no records of the church and no trace of the building exist it has become the center of an annual Memorial Day service. The cemetery is one of the most beautifully kept in the county. Beaver Creek Methodists worship today in a converted school building. When the Rev. A. L. McKeever preached his first sermon at Beaver Creek, the highlight of the occasion was the breaking of the timid young minister's trouser band as he knelt for the opening prayer. To this day the spectacle of the harried youngster conducting an entire service with one hand clenched stiffly in a trouser pocket provides a choice subject for discussion.

Mount Zion was one of the earliest churches of the Methodist Episcopal faith. Built of hand hewn timbers chinked with mud on the property of Felix Grimes near Frost in the opening years of the nineteenth century, the structure was typical of the period. It originally contained the customary slave gallery, but this was removed shortly before the close of the century.

The Dilley, Grimes, and Waugh families were prominent in the first recorded activity, in 1833, when the building was repaired and the congregation organized. In a report dated November 20, 1848, Trustees Martin Dilley, Washington Moore, and Beverly Waugh announced that the church was complete to the ceiling and that $50 would finish it. Beverly Waugh was the brother of the local preacher, John Waugh, who already has won note for the well-tempered hoes and axes which he supplied to his pioneer neighbors. Their father, Samuel Waugh, had been a guiding force in the early history of Mount Zion.

Washington Moore once ran afoul of his church colleagues when he was heard to boast that he had raised apples bigger than pumpkins. Such tales,

it was ruled, were unbecoming to a church member, and Moore was called before the board to answer for his misconduct. He replied to the charge by stating that he meant big apples as compared with small pumpkins. He produced several very large apples and some pumpkins which proved to be smaller than his prize fruit. The case was dismissed.

In 1850 the Herrings, Riders, Currys, and Lightners withdrew to build a church on Knapps Creek which would be more convenient to residents of that neighborhood. With the division of the church which occurred during the war, the Mount Vernon members broke with their Mount Zion neighbors and became a part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Characteristically box-like in construction the Mount Vernon building is distinctive for its flawless lumber. Despite war use as a barracks, and subsequent hard usage, the church - abandoned in 1935 upon the reunion of the denomination - stands as a monument to the meticulous care of its builders.

Bethel Church, near Dilley's Mill, was formed by a portion of the Mount Zion congregation when Union sympathizers barred them from the old church.

Mount Zion Church is now covered by a metal roof and metal sheathing. There has been some discussion concerning the practicability of restoring the old log building to its original rusticity. Now on the Huntersville circuit, it is used alternately with the Bethel church pending the outcome of efforts to reunite the two congregations.

Another old log church of the same period as Mount Zion was New Salem, built on land near Greenbank given by James and Jane Wooddell. Upon division of the church, its Southern members bought the property and made it a part

of the M. E. South. The first building had a relatively short term of life. It was torn down shortly after the division and replaced by the present structure.

Third member of this Methodist Episcopal trio was Hamlin Chapel, built in 1835 on Stony Creek. The church is said to have been named for Hamilton Duffield, father of John Duffield who contributed the land and timber. The congregation, which had been organized at some unrecorded date prior to the construction of the church, held services in various homes and sheds. At a revival held at Swago in a barn owned by Phoebe McNeill, plans were laid for building the log church. Since no money was available, each of the 19 families contributed labor to the cause. William Baxter superintended the work. Henry Duncan, a carpenter, John Barlow, John Auldridge, an expert hewer, and William McCollum, a stone mason, performed a large share of the work. Though its membership has dwindled as newer churches have arisen, Hamlin Chapel is still in use and in good repair.

Bethel Church, at Buckeye, was born of the dispute between the Methodist Episcopal faith and the Methodist Protestant belief. When the Rev. Thomas G. Isherwood, the Methodist Protestant minister, was refused the use of the Methodist Episcopal meeting house, John Buckley, a non-member allowed him to hold services in the Buckley home. This new Methodism attracted an enthusiastic following. The church, then known as Buckley Church, was built and a revival held. Seventeen members of the Methodist Episcopal congregation attended and, promptly being expelled from their own church for the digression, joined the new order. They soon were followed by 18 others. All this took place, as nearly as can be determined, in the year 1841. Such

prominent families as the Overholts, Buckleys, McNeills, Rogers, and McKeevers were active members. Both the Rev. A. L. McKeever and the Rev. Moore McNeill are products of this church.

The first Presbyterian congregation in Huntersville was organized by the Reverend Dunlap in 1836. At that time members of all sects worshipped in the courthouse. On August 12, 1854, William Gamman, Benjamin Herold, and James T. Lockridge contracted in behalf of the church with Davis W. Kerr for the construction of a building at a cost of $1,846. The Presbyterians and the different Methodist congregations had met in the academy building since its completion in 1842. When the new church building was finished it was thrown open to all groups.

During the War between the States, the neat, white frame hall was used as a hospital. Sometime in 1862 the large pulpit Bible was stolen from the church by the soldiers. No more was known of it until 1929, when it was discovered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the possession of James R. Mellon, brother of the late Andrew Mellon.

In 1896 a second story was added to the church for the use of the Masonic Lodge. The building has been very well preserved, and despite its war service in a community that was practically demolished, its excellent condition belies its age.

The Rev. James E. Moore and the Rev. John Waugh organized a Methodist class in the Indian Draft neighborhood in 1840. The group met regularly in the local school buildings until 1922. At that time a new two-room school was built and the Rev. G. S. Weiford gave the board of education a lot for the new building and $300 in exchange for the old school, a frame building

constructed in 1893. He deeded the property to A. N. Barlow, John D. Gay, J. O. Cogar, W. H. Shearer, and himself, trustees of Mount Pleasant Methodist Church. Though this congregation has never been large in terms of present day community congregations, it has been one of the most continuously active and successful of the Pocahontas churches.

Droop Mountain Methodist Protestants were organized in 1842 by Dr. George Brown, then president of the Pittsburg Conference. The group, whose charter members were Martha McKeever, Elizabeth Hoover, John McLaughlin, and the families of David and Solomon Cochran, had been meeting in private homes under the Rev. Richard Walker prior to the erection of the building in 1858, during the term of the Rev. W. W. Blake. Like many of this period, the structure was built from "hand-worked" lumber which had been sawn on a mill and planed by hand. Never painted, the church is seldom used today, but the members of the community keep it in good repair. Its burial lot is neatly kept, and some of the well preserved grave stones date back to the first days of the church.

During the years immediately before and after the Civil War there was hardly any increase in the number of churches in the county. Christian charity found no place in the era of sectionalism, when distrust and hatred of neighbors were commonplace. Post war years found the country too prostrate even to repair the damage done to the buildings during the conflict. Some churches died immediate deaths, while others staggered fitfully along for years before succumbing.

In the '70's the minds of the people gradually turned again to the improvement of their churches. Population increases and shifting of population

centers encouraged new building, and the movement gained impetus until during the lumber boom days of the early 1900's every small group was erecting its own house.

As a result there are approximately 60 churches in use in the county in 1940. Memberships range from eight or ten persons upward to 400. Most of the churches are still members of circuits or are served by ministers who preach at two or three different churches on successive Sundays. As in former days a large portion of the buildings are used either jointly or alternately by the members of the various sects within the communities.

Oak Grove Church, still the largest in the Little Levels, has a congregation of 200, and there are 211 enrolled in Sunday School. Dr. Samuel Moore has served as supply pastor during 1940. Officers include the elders, Henry Beard, Harper Beard, John Manrick, C. W. Kennison, William Cackley, and Duncan Moore, and the deacons, Kyle Beard, John May, Carl Beard, Cameron Beard, Joe McNeel, Eric Clutter, Preston McLaughlin, Moffett McNeel, and Walter D. Clark. In the Auxiliary two adult circles and one young ladies circle function under the chairmanship of Mrs. H. W. McNeel. Twice each month preaching services are held at Beard Chapel, built in 1922 as an outpost of the Oak Grove Church.

The Rev. L. S. Shires serves Wesley Chapel, descended from the White Pole Church, and George Clendenen superintends the Sunday School of 100 members. Mrs. Carl Beard is current president of the Woman's Division of Christian Service.

Although only 15 members are still active at Hamlin Chapel, better known as "The Old Log Church," more than 400 attended the 105th anniversary service

directed by the Rev. R. H. Skaggs in July, 1940. Another of the old churches, Bethel, built at Buckeye by those who rebelled against the strict Methodist Episcopal faith, is still in use.

The square, frame church of the Trinity M. E. South congregation on Stamping Creek was built in 1915 from materials taken from the abandoned church of the Warn Lumber Company. The Reverend Shires and his wife assist with the Sunday School. Mrs. Lanty Hevener and Mrs. Grover Thompson are active leaders in the congregation. Twice a month the Reverend Shires preaches both here and at Marvin Chapel, built in 1878 one and one half miles north of Mill Point. There are 80 members in the Sabbath School of Marvin Chapel directed by Mrs. Walter Arbogast, Choirs from all parts of the county assemble at the widely popular song services which Mr. Fred Ruckman conducts every third Sunday.

Methodists of Seebert meet in a white frame church erected in 1906. G. O. Auldridge has superintended the Sunday School, which has an average attendance of about 40, for 25 years. Active women workers of the church include Mrs. G. O. Auldridge, Mrs. C. K. Levisay, Mrs. Herold Elmore, Miss Susan Pyles, Miss Laura Pyles, and Miss Nina Boblett. Both the Methodist Episcopal members and the members of the abandoned Methodist Protestant Church worship in the Seebert Church. At Spring Creek, just below Seebert, a group undaunted by lack of facilities hold services and young peoples' meetings in an abandoned building.

Another of the log churches is Mt. Olivet Methodist Church at Droop Mountain, built in 1880. The 75 members are addressed by the Reverend Tenney once each month. Mr. Wilton McMillion is superintendent of the Sunday School,

which has an enrollment of 50.

Among the appointments of the busy Reverend Shires is Sharon M. E. Church, South, at Locust Creek, built in 1890. Presbyterians of the neighborhood attended this church until they built Beard Chapel. Remus May is superintendent of the Sunday School. Services are held monthly.

Marlinton Presbyterian Church, organized April 23, 1881, is housed in a large, brick building finished in 1915. Its 380 members make the congregation one of the strongest in the county. The church helps support Sabbath Schools on Elk River and at Buckeye and is planning to extend this activity. Encouraged by the Rev. J. C. Wool, the young peoples' organization has grown until in 1940 it reached a membership of 200 under the direction of Calvin W. Price assisted by Mrs. Dewey Stemple, Mrs. Alice Jackson, Mrs. S. M. Hench, and Mrs. J. C. Wool. The Men's Bible Class, lead by Mr. T. S. McNeel, has 40 members, and the Auxiliary, of which Mrs. G. D. Stemple is president, has accomplished a tremendous good in raising funds for church improvements as well as in aid to Presbyterian benevolent and educational institutions.

Historic Mt. Zion Church near Frost, used alternately with Bethel, probably soon will be united once more with the younger body. Another offspring of Mt. Zion, Mt. Vernon, the oldest church on Knapps Creek, though still the scene of occasional services, gradually is being supplanted by Mt. Carmel, which was built in 1905 and now has 40 members under the pastorate of Rev. S. R. Simpson. Mt. Carmel shares the valley with Westminster Presbyterian Church, which was organized in 1903, and hold services twice monthly under the Rev. A. B. Williford, formerly of the Huntersville church. Average attendance is about 40. The Sabbath School enrollment reached 35 in 1940.

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Although Cummings Creek Methodist Church was completed in 1933 it was not dedicated until June, 1940, and so may be considered the "baby" church of the Huntersville district. During the years in which records have been kept, the congregation has maintained an average membership of about 30. The Reverend Simpson gives a portion of his time to the group.

New Hope Church in the Buzzard community is used jointly by the Methodist and United Brethren congregations, which have a single Sunday School of 35 members. Methodist and Brethren ministers visit the church on alternate Sundays.

The Trinity Methodist Church at Frost was completed in 1883, just a short time after the death of its leading sponsor, J. B. Hannah. Through the concerted effort of its members the church was enlarged and renovated in 1936-38 and is in excellent condition. Activity of the women's organization, which totals about 30 members, has been a powerful influence in maintaining this church. 1940 officers of the congregation were: Ashby Sharp, Kent Chestnut, Oliver Sprouse, Henderson Sharp, Ledford Shrader, Mrs. Bessie Chestnut, and Dewey McCarty.

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Church arose in 1893, built under the leadership of Henry White, Sr. of Douthards Creek. Always served by itinerant preachers, the church now has had the Rev. S. Kullman of Pendleton County as pastor for four years. Nearly all of the 16 confirmed members are members of the White family. Also in the community is the Minnehaha Springs M. E. South congregation who, aided by contributions of other denominations in the vicinity, built their church in 1926. The membership of 56 and an active Sunday Schhol under the leadership of Mrs. Elmer Moore and Mrs. Sidney Wilson are an important social force in the community.

To the west and to the north of Marlinton is the far flung Edray District. One of the old congregations of this area is the Swago Methodist which had its beginning in the class taught by Sampson and Nancy Mathews in 1825. The present church building was finished in 1873 by Carpenters Jeff Killingsworth and Oliver McKeever. Trustees are Austin Duncan, William H. Rogers, Owen W. Kellison and Okey Walton. A former trustee, the late Porter Kellison, has not yet been replaced.

Members of the Central Union Methodist Protestant Church bought the old Marlinton Methodist building in 1923, tore it down and began to erect their church from the salvaged materials in August, 1924. After a series of discouraging set backs - the partially completed building was blown down once - they completed the project in 1926. The Methodists and Brethren had joined in the work, and both still attend the joint services. Trustees are Granville Wilfong, Jessie Wilfong, George Wheeler, Mrs. Olie Jackson and Hanson Sharp. The Rev. S. R. Simpson serves the congregation.

There are 45 members in the Sunday School of the active Mt. Pleasant

church of Indian Draft, of which the Rev. R. H. Skaggs is pastor. The trustees, S. P. Landis, J. O. Cogar, and Lawrence McKenney are leaders of the unusually enthusiastic congregation.

Two churches serve the nearby Negro settlement at Brownsburg. Only a small class is still in attendance at the Macedonian Baptist Church, built in 1902 on land given by B. W. and Maud E. Vaughn. The Brownsburg Methodist Church was built in 1905 on land belonging to Joseph Wilson. Members of the two congregations worship at both churches and cooperate in numerous activities.

Oldest and largest Negro congregation in the county is that of the Mt. Zion Baptist Church, now in Marlinton, which was organized in 1879 on Browns Mountain by the Rev. Coleman Booze, who walked through the mountains from Virginia to hold services once each year. The present building was erected shortly before 1911 under the leadership of the Rev. I. H. Goodwin. Fifty members and a Sunday School class of 35 are led by the Rev. C. C. Logan.

The Pleasant Green M. E. Church, Colored, was built in 1888 on land deeded by W. L. McNeel, near Seebert. Florence Tibbs, John Henry, Vernie Bolden and Mattie Tibbs are active leaders of the group of 25. The Rev. Graham serves both the Pleasant Green Church and a small group at Durbin who have no church but meet regularly in private homes.

The only other Negro congregation in the county is that of the First Baptist Church of Cass, organized in 1917 by the Rev. I. H. Goodwin who today is again its pastor. The Sunday School has about 35 members.

Among the active churches of the Edray neighborhood we find that West Union was completed in 1901 on land given by William and Mamie Cochran. Leaders at present are Neal Beverage, Clawson Beverage, Porter Sharp, William

W. Gilmer, J. P. Duncan, Mrs. Ella Tyler, Jane VanReenan, Ruth Elliot and Lillie Kellison.

The Edray Methodist Church was built in 1883 when the congregation outgrew old Hamlin Chapel. The Reverend Skaggs preaches twice monthly to the 25 members. Mrs. Arnett McNeil directs the Sunday School of 30 members. Trustees in 1940 were Asa C. Barlow, Collet Gay, and Robert Gay. Stewards were Robert Gay, Frank Young and Mrs. S. R. Moore.

Fairview Methodist Protestant Church, built about 1878, now has a membership of 26 and has maintained continuously a position as one of the most active churches of the denomination. For 20 years the family of Hanson Sharp was a guiding force in the church. Since their departure Mrs. Mollie Johnson, Mrs. Goshia Sharp, and the family of Ressie Moore have assumed its leadership.

Poage Chapel, on the road to Cloverlick, has been neglected of late and is badly in need of repair. It is now used principally by members of the United Brethren congregation. Georgia C. Shinaberry conducted a small class for children and young people of the community during the summer of 1940.

Grace Protestant Episcopal Church at Cloverlick was dedicated Emanual Church on August 21, 1882, but its present name was inadvertently applied when the building was moved in 1908. The ceaseless efforts of Mrs. John Ligon brought about organization of the church and the building stood on the Ligon farm until rerouting of the road necessitated its removal to Cloverlick. The late W. C. Gardner moved to the community from Baltimore in 1907 and, as Lay Leader, achieved a considerably increase in church attendance and activity. Members of his family and the Ligon family constitute a large portion

of the congregation today.

Union Church was completed at Clover Lick in 1916. Lumber operations were extensive at the time, and the people, aided by contributions of lumber operators were able to build one of the most comfortable and well-equipped small churches of the county. From 1918 until 1928 it was a mission of the Alexander Memorial Presbyterian Church and was served by the Rev. O. N. Miles. Present trustees are John W. Sharp, W. H. Young, Savilla Shields and Walter Byrd. An average Sunday School attendance of 33 is maintained.

Alexander Memorial Presbyterian Church, better known as Driftwood, was built on land donated by Judge James Warwick about 1901 and named in memory of the Rev. E. F. Alexander, who had led a movement to obtain a church building prior to his death, May 6, 1895. The Rev. James T. Pharr is now pastor. An unusually strong church, Driftwood has maintained missions at surrounding points and has contributed money and food to institutions and missionary projects of the Presbyterian faith. John H. Hevener is elder of the church. Deacons are John Doyle, K. W. Meeks, Fred McLaughlin, Paul Hevener and Otho Shields. Mr. John Hevener, Mr. Doyle and Guy Tallman are trustees.

Big Spring Presbyterian Church, on Elk, was organized in 1894 and built its church on a lot given by Col. A. C. L. Gatewood. The Rev. O. N. Miles preaches twice each month. The 30 Sunday School members meet every Sabbath. In 1940 Mr. E. S. Gatewood was the sole elder of the church.

In 1931-32 members of the Slaty Fork Methodist congregation remodeled their church, formerly a school building, and transformed it into a thoroughly modern structure, equal in equipment and comfort to the better city churches. Ivan L. Sharp, who designed the remodeled church, Kingsley Moorison, Mattie

Morrison, Luther D. Sharp, Genevieve Sharp, Oscar W. Kerr, Goldie Gay Kerr, Ethel Eye, Paul L. Sharp, Vonda M. Sharp, Jesse P. Hannah, and Lelah Hannah are tireless leaders in the advancement of welfare in the church. Although the Reverend Skaggs preaches in the church only twice each month, its calendar is filled with activities of the Epworth League, the Ladies Aid, and the Singing Association.

The Reverend Skaggs preaches once a month at White's Chapel, converted in 1919 from an old school building at Woodrow by former members of West Union Church. Lloyd VanReenan, Andrew Galford, and Edith VanReenan are stewards of the church, whose congregation is so small that a reunion with West Union, only a mile away, is being considered.

In Greenbank District, home of many of the early churches, there is still much religious activity. Old Baxter Church at Dunmore has a Sunday School roll of more than 70. John U. Hevener, Russell Campbell, and Marilee Campbell are officers of the class. Mrs. Fred Pritchard, Mrs. John Pritchard, Walter Hively, Mrs. Harry Miller, Mrs. John U. Hevener, and Mrs. L. R. Campbell teach the various departments. The church has recently become self-supporting and increasingly active under the ministry of the Rev. A. B. Williford. The Auxiliary, with Mrs. Samuel Barlow as president, has raised money for church improvements as well as for charitable causes.

The Dunmore Methodist Church was completed in 1891. The Rev. Quade R. Arbogast ministers to a congregation of 103 persons in the attractive white frame building, noted for its high steeple. Stewards O. G. Campbell, Mrs. B. Frank Taylor, and Mrs. R. M. Hiner, and trustees Ernest N. Moore, H. M. Taylor, Winfred McElwee, and Harry M. Moore, who was one of the original trustees,

minister church affairs. Ernest N. Moore supervised the church school for 31 years and still holds the title of honorary superintendent. H. M. Taylor was active superintendent in 1940.

A short distance to the east of Dunmore is Wesley Chapel in Glade Hill, organized in 1873. The church, built and dedicated in 1897, now has 180 members. J. A. Sheets, E. A. Hudson, S. H. Elliot, and John Matheney are officers of the church; Mr. Elliot also is superintendent of the Sunday School.

The Cass Presbyterian Church has an active membership of 144 persons under the pastorate of the Reverend Pharr. The church is notable for the large number of church workers and missionaries that it has contributed to other sections of the country. The self-supporting Sunday School of 133 members is supervised by A. N. Smith, Sr. It sponsors an outpost at Deer Creek which has 20 members. Mrs. W. T. Miller is now president of the very active Woman's Auxiliary.

The united Methodist churches in Cass have an aggregate membership of 155 who use the M. E. South building for church services and conduct their Sunday School in the M. E. building. They have selected E. R. Loudermilk superintendent. Stewards of the church are C. P. Gillispie, J. W. Bible, Roy Cook, Burk McCarty, and the Rev. H. O. Blackhurst. Mrs. Charles Sheets was 1940 president of the Women's Society of Christian Service.

The Rev. D. R. Carter now preaches to the strongly organized congregation of Mount Union Methodist Church at Wanless. The church was built in 1906 on land deeded by Charles and Hannah Wanless. Mrs. Hull of Durbin is president of the Missionary Society. Stewards of the congregation of 43 members are Minnie Wanless, Willis Cassell, Garnet Beverage and Walter Beverage. Mr.

Cassell, George Wanless and Elmer Houchin are trustees.

Bethel M. E. Church on Back Allegheny has 45 members among whom J. Frank Curry, Wallace Curry, David N. Moore, Forrest K. Moore, Mrs. Annie Cromer, Cecil Houchens, and L. D. Nottingham, officers, are still active. The building was renovated during the summer of 1940. The Reverend Carder is pastor.

There are now 123 members in the New Salem church at Greenbank. Clarence A. Sheets, Ward McLaughlin, W. H. Sheets, W. D. Slavens, E. F. Arbogast, and D. C. Taylor are church officers. The Woman's Society of Missionary Service is organized jointly with that of Wesley Chapel under the leadership of Mrs. Quade R. Arbogast.

The Arbovale Church was built in 1899 to serve in the stead of historic Deer Creek Chapel. Highlight of the church year is Homecoming Day, which has been observed for the past ten years. Officers in 1940 were C. E. Flynn, Owen Rader, Adolphus Shears, Harry Simmons, Mrs. Clyde Gillispie, Nettie Sheets, Dessie Tracy, and Glen Arbogast. The Reverend Carder serves the church.

Kerr Memorial Church at Boyer is used alternately by Methodists and United Brethren. Built in 1905, it was named in memory of Lieut. Robert D. Kerr, son of James Kerr, who died in service shortly after graduating from the United States Naval Academy with high honors. Asa Wilfong is superintendent of the union Sunday School. Daniel Ryder, George Cromer, Mr. and Mrs. Glen Tracy, and Thelma Pugh are teachers in the organization.

Arbogast Memorial Chapel was built at Bartow in 1882 on the land of Charles and Elizabeth Burner. Though formerly open to all denominations, it is now used exclusively by the Methodists, who have a membership of 98.

officers during 1940 were I. E. Methany, B. J. Snyder, Harper Beverage, Oscar Turner, Howard Kreamer, Mrs. B. J. Snyder, Frank Gaynor, and Edith Burner.

There are now 267 members in the united Methodist church at Durbin. The congregation meets in the building of the M. E. Church, South. Dr. D. L. Snyder came in 1939 to unite the Methodist denominations and has remained to build a highly successful organization. Active leaders in the church are: H. S. Banton, Mrs. A. E. Burner, W. W. Hoover, C. Forrest Hill, Mona Hull, Grace Kisner, Odith Lambert, T. P. Lambert, C. G. Mack, Betty Parg, Mrs. Max Poscover, Mrs. H. L. Stokes, Isom Vance, Edith Townsand, Mrs. C. C. Watts, Mrs. J. L. Williams, June Stewart, Ralph Bassatt, and Roderick Cromer.

Two relatively new faiths in Pocahontas are those of the Nazarenes and the Church of God. The Nazarenes are now building a stone church in Marlinton, where they have about 75 members under the leadership of the Rev. Carl Nutter. Superintendent Carl G. Davis directs a Sunday School of 100 members. The other leading church of the Nazarene faith is at Frank, where the Rev. and Mrs. A. R. Smith minister to 37 members. There are 88 members in the Sunday School. Officers of this church are Mrs. Robert Wagner, William Lucky, James Morton, Henry Brown, and B. J. Moore.

Members of the Church of God at Brush Run have no organization and keep no records since, according to their belief, God takes care of such matters. Morgan Collins, formerly of Boyer, was active in building this congregation. There is also a small class of about 15 members on Cummings Creek. This group has no pastor.

Save in the larger communities where the newer faiths have established units, the religion of Pocahontas has remained the quiet, old-fashioned

worship of former years. The minister travels from one charge to the
in an automobile, but his work is the same as when he rode horseback or
trod through the mountains on foot. The county is a stronghold of the simple
faith which guided the builders of this new land through the laborious years
of the frontier.